

# “Knowledge vendors” and “alms-askers”: studying scientific and political discourse in Anglo-American and Russian socio-humanities

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**Abstract.** This article analyzes the interaction and mutual influence of the discourse of science and the public authorities in modern Russian and Anglo-American socio-humanities. The aim of the article is to identify the methodological bases of the research on discourse of the public authorities and science in the modern Anglo-American historiography and assessment of their relevance to the analysis of modern Russian administrative and scientific discourse. The authors conducted the analysis of Russian scientific products and revealed a positivist, quantitative bias in the methodology of social sciences, which study scientific and authoritative discourse in modern Russian society. The authors attempted to reflect the diffusion of science and power discourse. By the example of modern Russian realities they illustrated the pattern of how the researches on political discourse and influence of the state order on scientific production are strongly committed to this discourse and cannot go beyond it. An objective study of the experience of Anglo-American Russian studies allows looking at Russian governmental and scientific discourse from the perspective of a new culture, a new empire and a new intellectual history.

## 1 Introduction

The study of speech ideological genres in the discourse of the scientific community and the public authorities takes a solid niche in the contemporary socio-humanitarian knowledge. It is implemented at the intersection of diverse theoretical and methodological foundations. The effectiveness of the interaction of the government and the scientific community depends directly on the nature of mutual changes and mutual stimulation. The main task of state institutions is to identify the problems of national importance while science is called upon to design solutions to specifically identified problems [1]. The result of this interaction becomes the “natural selection” of the best practices and solutions based on the principle of the competition. At the same time, the state corrects the directions and forms of social development based on a scientific approach. The state defines new development tasks.

Any political system involves the formation of power structures in the scientific field, as well as their functional separation, constant diversification of research links with power structures. However, in different countries the share of state intervention in science, a decision-making system in the field of science and technology, research subsidies vary considerably. As a

consequence, speech ideological genres of the scientific and administrative discourse vary too.

This article analyzes the interaction and mutual influence of the discourse of science and the public authorities in modern Russian and Anglo-American socio-humanities. The aim of the article is to identify the methodological bases of the research on discourse of the public authorities and science in modern Anglo-American historiography and assessment of their relevance for the analysis of modern Russian administrative and scientific discourse.

## 2 Research sources and theoretical framework

The body of historiographical sources for this research consisted of three clusters of scientific works. The first is Russian historiography (2000-2015) of scientific and public-political discourse (works on sociolinguistics and the methodology of socio-humanitarian science in general) [1-3]. The second is Anglophone historiography of the scientific and public-political discourse research of the last two decades [4-7]. The third is Anglo-American Russian studies, the analysis of which is proposed to assess the relevance of Anglo-American methodological tools for the analysis of Russian

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administrative and scientific discourse [9-13]. The central place in proposed research is occupied by research tools of new intellectual history, new cultural history, political and cultural anthropology, the theoretical arsenal of the linguistic turn and social constructivism.

### **3 Historiography and methodology of modern Russian research on scientific and political discourse**

Throughout the 20th century the attention of Russian researchers was attracted by the organization of effective interaction between science and the public authorities which was considered as determining factor of population welfare growth and consolidating the country's geopolitical role.

O.V. Bleikher studies ideological speech genres in the administrative discourse of modern Russia [1]. The author relies on a speech genre theory of M.M. Bakhtin as well as the postmodern interpretation of discourse which suggests studying of speech genres in intersubject socio-cultural practices: media, public and municipal administration, education, health, culture. O.V. Bleikher identified repeated inconsistencies in the reproduction and disappearance of ideological speech genres in the administrative discourse during the formation of innovation type of organizational culture. The author identified a number of system errors in the sphere of the creation and implementation of innovations. Such problems include: depersonalization, a different understanding of "innovation" by business and scientific community.

Modern Russian research on scientific and authoritative discourse, with rare exceptions, do not go beyond the public discourse and the official order (public authorities' expectations), since the science is within the system of executive power [2]. The authors conducted the analysis of Russian scientific products and revealed a positivist, quantitative bias in the methodology of social sciences, which study scientific and authoritative discourse in modern Russian society.

A number of contemporary authors examine the practice of using critical discourse analysis in the Russian social sciences and humanities, particularly in sociolinguistics, political linguistics and political science. O. M. Morgoon, for instance, stated the deficit practical application of this method by Russian political scientists [3].

Theoretical research in this area has been developed in Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, in particular, special attention is paid to the discursive analysis of the historical and cultural texts, psychosemantic methods of analysis (a technique of "repertory grids"), narrative analysis. However, there is a methodological asymmetry: despite adequate attention at a theoretical level, critical discourse analysis is not used as a studying tool of specific Russian political and social phenomena, verbalized in the public space.

### **4 Historiography and methodology of English-American scholarship of scientific and political discourse**

Modern Anglo-American research on science and authorities discourse comply with the postmodern paradigm, the tendencies of interdisciplinarity and interpretations. A special place in the structure of the methodological apparatus of Western researchers is taken by critical discourse analysis. This method suggested by Norman Fairclough and successfully adapted by number of social sciences and humanities, allows neutralizing the contradiction between the qualitative and quantitative research methods orientation.

The aim of discourse analysis is the study of structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control, real social interactions that take linguistic form. The empirical value of discourse analysis is to focus on the criticism of power relations.

In line with the ideas of T.A. van Dijk, active attention is paid not only to informative aspects, but also to the technique of the political discourse analysis. Methods of semiotic analysis (the study of discourse-frame), as well as the rhetoric and literary criticism (the analysis of a particular discourse-works) are widely used.

Using methodological tools based on critical discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics, researchers focus on clarifying the textual representations of topical social, political, cultural issues [4-7]. The critical and reflective function of sociolinguistic discourse analysis is realized due to the diversification of stakeholders interested in an innovative research projects, a variety of funding sources for science.

In contrast to Russia in the USA there is no single science management system as well as a single consolidated article in the state budget on a research and scientific costs. Relations between research institutions and public authorities are much more diverse and tend to increase the diversity. The system of power in American science is well diversified. It consists of governments of individual states along with the federal authorities, universities, the industrial sector and other stakeholders.

The scientific community – vendors of scientific knowledge – has the ability to evaluate independently the public and scientific discourse development. Thus, mechanisms to overcome the monopoly in science play an important role in the choice of research methodology in the sphere of scientific and political discourse.

### **5 Critical discourse analysis of science and public authorities in contemporary Anglo-American Russian studies**

An impressive body of British and American scientific production on the Soviet and post-Soviet subjects (Russian Studies, Sovetology, Kremlinology) is still insufficiently investigated in the domestic Russian studies.

At the same time, objective research on “side view” – the experience of the Anglo-American Russian studies – allows answering a series of questions, which, as a rule, are outside of the priorities of Russian researchers [8]. How important is the study of the scientific and public-political discourse in contemporary Russian Studies? What research methods and theoretical approaches are typical for the Anglo-American historiography in this direction?

Equipped with the methods of cultural and political anthropology, ideas of the social constructivism and the linguistic turn, Soviet and Russian Studies (2000-2015) have moved from “the archive revolution” to the dynamic and exciting thought experiments of new cultural, new imperial and new intellectual history.

The scope of research interests of the Anglo-American researchers includes new aspects of soviet past and Russian present, particularly the specifics of the scientific and political discourse, their interaction and mutual influence. In the 2000s, in the spotlight of american researchers there are gender discourse of Russian science and the central government, national and post-Soviet discourse, the neo-imperial discourse and the authoritarian political discourse in general.

A distinctive feature of Western works of the early 21st century devoted to the post-Soviet scientific and administrative discourse is increasingly insistent statement of the inability to overcome the crisis “post-socialist” state of national identity, opportunistic appeal to the transitivity of scientific, educational, socio-cultural and political processes [9].

The official discourse of such fixedness on “post”-identity is more than twenty years old today. The most successful metaphor for the phenomenon was written by M. Light in 2003 [10]. She indicated it as “inescapable post-socialism burden”, which suggests the need for multiple returns to the issues of collective identity in the post-soviet space, the relation to the legacy of the Soviet scientific school, the Soviet system of education and training, the national idea and political thought, the model of relationship between the government and the society, etc.

Ideological and political vacuum, formed after the collapse of the USSR and the discredit of Marxist-Leninist scientific paradigm and the state ideology, made it difficult to understand and define clearly scientific as well as governmental development priorities during the 1990s.

Withdrawal of traditional ideological component from the official governmental discourse aggravated identity crisis of Russian scientific community. Concepts of Russian science and education modernization, which were created in the 1990s, did not include descriptions of the past as a matter of general pride, the perfect plan for the future, a clear description of the means necessary to overcome the crisis.

By the end of 2000s, at first glance, there have been some advances in the debate about the national idea and the concept of development of Russian science in the new environment. The criticism of “mindless copying of Western models” in the 1990s in Russia gave way to the consensus of scientific representations, based on rational

analysis of national interests, the need for technological breakthroughs and innovation development, a more independent political line in relation to the West.

American historians analyze the correlation of integration policy in the post-Soviet space with the transformations of the scientific and educational discourse connected with the thesis that geopolitical field of the former Soviet Union is Russia’s vital interest [11].

As the researchers noted, in the post-Soviet period, the dynamics of the recovery of the global prestige and the name of Russian science is closely concerned not only with the reconstruction of traditional relationship “science-State” but also with the revival of cooperation between Russian scientific and educational institutions with their closest geographical neighbors - the former Soviet republics. Thus, the evidences for the revival of the Soviet science aesthetics and “the rhetoric of peoples’ friendship” are the principles of projects selection for financing by Russian research funds. They generously encourage scientific cooperation of Russian research organizations with the colleagues from the “near abroad” [12].

According to the authors, despite the visible successes of defining the role and status of Russia in the world and the construction of the “new” Russian identity in the 2000-2010s, the urgency of the problem of national identity still permeates the Russian socio-cultural sphere and is reflected directly in the scientific, administrative and political discourse [12]. The authors prove such allegations involving non-traditional sources base, which represents new opportunities for discourse analysis.

For instance, they provide cross analysis of official documents (decrees of the Russian President, the Russian Federation Government and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation), and the primary sources that may be called “unofficial” sources: interviews with politicians and well-known scientists, the texts of public statements and press releases on significant events in the field of science (anniversaries, professional holidays and memorable dates) of 1990s - 2000s.

In the post-Soviet historical and cultural context, there was problematic to implement even the discourse of so-called “spiritual ties” as the key to the cohesion and prosperity of the nation. The thesis of the need to overcome the shortage of human feelings (mercy, compassion, sympathy, support), which were generally called “the spiritual ties of the nation”, was formed by President V. V. Putin in his Address to the Federal Assembly in 2012. This idea almost immediately became the object of sarcastic public comments and still exists as an Internet meme. Thus, the governmental initiative, which was originally conceived as a catalyst for socio-humanitarian research, aimed at the search for identifying foundations of the Russian nation, was not successful.

Researchers draw readers’ attention to the category of so-called “missing” socio-political discourse in modern Russia - the civil-democratic discourse. Socio-humanitarian studies of the 1990s on the Russian civil-democratic discourse were supported mainly by foreign

charitable foundations such as the Soros Foundation. In 2010s this practice was declared inadmissible because of concerns that the activities of researchers, funded from abroad, could harm national interests.

As a result of these processes, in Russia in the 2010s, the civil-democratic scientific discourse was perceived as a “pseudoscience” in parallel with the extinction of the activities of the democratic parties of the right wing (in Russian terminology of the early 1990s). Since that time politological and sociological research with the classic western methodologies become irrelevant and are not funded by the state. Political science and sociology disappear from the list of obligatory university disciplines of general education cycle.

However, american historians note the dissonance between the public-political and scientific discourse in relation to the West and Western liberal values. In scientific discourse it creates a kind of “conflict of interest”: the commitment to achieve high-quality research that is recognized in the West, which is often in conflict with the need to fulfill the state order and to receive centralized research funding, compliance with national interests.

American researches justly remarks that nostalgia of modern Russian scientists for the forward positions of Soviet science in the world, as well as for the method of Soviet science organization in general, it is nothing more than a defense mechanism against the rapid and not always successful reorganization of the scientific and educational spheres.

The Russian scientific community of the 2000s willingly accepted and adopted the state concept of “innovation development”, which led to the replication of such ideological clichés in the scientific discourse as “nano-technology”, “resource efficiency”, “innovation”. These clichés have become an indispensable attribute of scientific articles and competitive applications, like references to the works of Marx and Lenin in the Soviet era. In 2010, these fixed expressions, reflecting the public inquiry, were supplemented by the reproductions of “import substitution” and “disruptive technologies” in the discourse. The flip side of the development of scientific discourse in a given direction is the emergence of a number of marginal clichés of corruption and embezzlement of public funds (for example, “saw-cut” and “kick-back”).

The possibilities of influence of the Russian society on the processes of democratization of post-Soviet science, providing a technological breakthrough, widely represented in the early 1990s, declined significantly, according to the authors, the mid-2000s, when the dominant role of the state in the organization and science funding, the implementation of scientific results came back in full. According to S. Gerovitch, the Russian scientific discourse is “always univocal; it tells the story from one side” [13].

Thus, the range of issues that can be resolved in the frame of the postmodern, in modern Russian socio-linguistics is quite wide. For example, a reflection of the “national trauma” in the discourse of Russian humanities (modern and very common discourse of the “fight against the falsification of history”, and numerous

campaigns for “ancientizing Slavic history”, in many ways comparable to the Soviet struggle against “rootless cosmopolitanism”), the struggle against revisionism of the Second World War history, followed by the diplomatic and similar scandals.

## 6 Conclusion

The authors conducted the analysis of Russian scientific products and revealed a positivist, quantitative bias in the methodology of social sciences which study scientific and authoritative discourse in modern Russian society. There is a methodological asymmetry: despite adequate attention at a theoretical level, critical discourse analysis is not used as a studying tool of specific Russian political and social phenomena, verbalized in the public space. The authors attempted to reflect the diffusion of science and power discourse. On the example of modern Russian realities they illustrated the pattern of how the researches on political discourse and influence of the state order on scientific production are strongly committed to this discourse and cannot go beyond it. An objective study of the experience of Anglo-American Russian studies allows looking at Russian governmental and scientific discourse from the perspective of a new culture, a new empire and a new intellectual history.

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